

2017 Report from
St. Vincent & the Grenadines

Cultural Diversity – 2005 Convention



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is an outcome of a UNESCO workshop on the Convention held in June 2016. It was prepared following extensive review of the various public documents impacting Cultural Policy and Government's social agenda as well as conversations and discussions which were held with individuals and umbrella bodies between August 2016 and January 2017. Entities such as; National Cultural Foundation (NCF), Carnival Development Corporation (CDC), St. Vincent & the Grenadines Association of Music Professionals (SVG AMP) and the Art n Action, craft grouping (AnA) were consulted. The report first provides background and then sets out the developments in SVG in regard to the areas of concern to the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions since SVG signed the Convention.

The report surmises the project executed in 2012/13 to review the national cultural policy. [It should be noted that the policy has not been formally adopted as yet.] The report then addresses each of the four (4) GOALS and areas covered in the Convention noting the achievements in SVG.

It is to the credit of SVG that within the limitations of resources and against the low level of public exposure and knowledge of the Convention much has been achieved in fulfilling our state party obligations.

We have constitutional protection for the freedom of the media. We have policy position that seeks to achieve universal internet access for the country. We have included culture concerns in our national development strategy document, "St. Vincent & the Grenadines National Economic and Social Development Plan 2013 – 2025". We have built several ties and formal approaches with civil society organisations involvement in governance with representation in major bodies such as the reparations committee, the tripartite labour commission and others. There have been efforts to further artist mobility through participation in the European Union Economic Partnership Agreement (EU EPA) agreement and the the CARICOM free movement of people initiative, both of which also seek to support the two way flow of cultural goods and services.

Of course the Convention is wide and in the short time that SVG has been a signatory it has not been possible for it to act on all aspects. There is work to be done in several areas of the GOALS. Things such as: Gender Equality, International Sustainability programs, achievement of real mobility rather than mere paper permission in the EU EPA, substantive flows of culture products and services in the south to north direction against the tsunami in the reverse direction.

The report concludes that while much has been accomplished more is needs to be done to open greater benefits to the citizens of SVG.

Background :

In June 2016, St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) was invited to send representation to a UNESCO workshop on the 2005 Convention held in Barbados. The purpose of the workshop was to: update Caribbean countries on the Convention and its goals, facilitate preparation of country reports by Caribbean countries, encourage greater use of the Convention in national work. This report is thus an outcome of that workshop.

St. Vincent and the Grenadines (SVG) signed Accession to the convention on 25th September 2009 as the 102nd country, which has either ratified or acceded. A support to the Convention is the International Fund for Cultural Diversity (IFCD). The convention recognizes that state parties may undertake the following activities:

1. *Introduce Cultural Policies and other measures that promote cultural creation and activity.*
2. *Incorporate culture in sustainable development strategies.*
3. *Encourage international corporation to facilitate mobility of artists.*
4. *Ensure information sharing and transparency on measures to protect and promote cultural diversity.*
5. *Promote the public's understanding of the importance of cultural diversity.*

In 2011 SVG applied for and received financial assistance from the IFCD to make several developmental interventions. The executed project was titled “Strengthening Creative & Cultural Development in SVG” and it was implemented between 22Feb2012 and 15Mar2013. IFCD provided US\$ 43,605 & Ministry of Culture provided US\$ 41,200.

Summary of the Project, “ Strengthening Creative & Cultural Development in SVG”.

Purpose of the project:

- was to update the National Cultural Policy,
- facilitate development of organisations in the creative and cultural industries (CCI) sector,

Intended Out Comes / Realized Out Comes:

1. Establishment of national framework for cultural statistics
 - a) While discussions have been held and sensitization begun and some stats are being collected the process is still far below the long term desire.
2. Identification of creative products and services to be developed for niche markets
 - a) Several areas such as music, crafts and fashion design have been identified.
 - b) Work continues to be done to seek the resources to achieve sustainable and significant change for these areas.
3. Have an updated policy that is formally accepted by the Government
 - a) The policy has been revised and several aspects that came to light as a result of the work undertaken to produce it were incorporated into the National Development Strategy & Policy 2013-2025.
4. Assist the development of the CCI sector organisations
 - a) We have seen the organisations AMP and Art n Action formed and growing.
 - b) We have seen fresh efforts by other CCI bodies to formalise their structures eg the newest steel band SouthEast Steel Orchestra.

Sustainability of project:

1. The Convention on Protection and Promotion of Diversity of Cultural Expression still needs more public promotion to further raise awareness in SVG. Even as we seek to add our expressions to the world stage.
2. More can be done [and will be done] to promote the objectives of the Convention in SVG

Notable Successes from the project:

- The organisation AMP has developed to the point that it was able to develop, write and implement its own project “Education Entertainment to Influence behavior to Climate Change Adaptation”. Funding came through UNDP GEF.
- AMP has presented three (3) annual national Music Awards shows, 2014, 15 & 16
- Crafts Persons have created a non-profit company for support of their collaborative effort.



ADDRESSING the CONVENTION in SVG 2017:

GOAL 1: Support of Sustainable Systems of Governance for Culture

Cultural Policies – SVG held several consultations between February 2012 and March 2013 to review and re-develop a national cultural policy. The exercise was headed by a consultant, Ms. Rene Baptiste a local lawyer and former Minister of Culture. Formal adoption by the Government is still pending.

Public Service Media – Little work has been done formally. However there is legal base for press freedom in the constitution. A Code of Conduct for Broadcast is being developed through the national Bureau of Standards. It is the direction of the various meetings that the needs of all sectors of the society shall be accommodated.

Digital Environment – Universal internet access is a priority concern for the country and Broadband Plan is under discussion and expected to be finalised and implementation begun during 2017.

Partnering with Civil Society – Little work has occurred formally in this area.

GOAL 2: Achievement of a Balanced Flow of Cultural Goods and Services & increased Mobility of Artists and Cultural Professionals

Mobility of Artists & Cultural Professionals – There have been efforts to facilitate mobility through participation in the EU EPA and the CARICOM free movement of people initiative. However in both cases, Immigration and Customs officials have proved to be less supportive of the systems than the agreement negotiators. Additionally the creators themselves have been less than proactive in trying to access the possibilities and claim the business requirements and complications of meeting the service requirements make the system too cumbersome.

Flow of Cultural Goods & Services – The flow of goods and services continues to be predominantly North to South as international companies use advertising and company size to dominate the market place so that South consumers purchase more of the North products than North consumers purchase South products. In South to South trade SVG has encountered language barriers which we have not had the resource base to easily overcome.

Treaties & Agreements – A number of Treaties and agreement have been signed and will in due course facilitate better two way flow but these in

themselves will not counter the globalization taking place as multi-national companies use their size and economies of scale to trade small enterprises out of the market.

GOAL 3: Integration of Culture into Sustainable Developmental Frame Works

National Sustainable Development Policies & Plans – Our country produced a national plan called the “St. Vincent & the Grenadines National Economic and Social Development Plan 2013 – 2025”. In the document the intention is to holistically address national development in a long term strategy. The document specifically identifies as a strategic goal, *“Building National Pride, Identity and Culture”*. The document notes that *“The national spirit of a people is determined and fashioned by their culture and this in turn constitutes one of the critical ingredients for nation building. As such the development, conservation, renovation and maintenance of infrastructure for culture at all levels, will be pursued. [and further that] This Plan articulates a vision for the positioning of culture in national life.”*

It lists as sub concerns:

“To instill in the citizenry a sense of national pride and appreciation of the history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

To engender a greater sense of community and social responsibility.

To preserve, maintain and promote the cultural heritage of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

To maximise the contribution of cultural industries to economic growth.”

International Sustainable Development Programs – The country has benefited significantly from the support provide by the IFCD and from the technical support to prepare a country report for the Convention. Other programs which have served to benefit SVG in the development of the cultural sector have been UNESCO, UNDP GEF and ALBA & CELAC alliances.

GOAL 4: Promote Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms

Gender Equality – The country has yet to focus on the gender equality aspects of our cultural endeavors. However it is reasonable to say that women are strongly represented in several sectors of focus, namely; fashion, craft, and visual arts. They are under represented in music and in technical support service except in the IT area. Sound Engineers, roadies and pop musicians are almost all male except where a few female singers perform. In extension male are under represented in fashion and craft. In the area of visual arts the numbers seen fairly even. Although again among video-graphic businesses male dominate. This again like music seems to be a matter of the work hours and the time away from family.

Artistic Freedom – In the matter of artistic freedom opportunity seems the biggest challenge rather than social, or political constraints. The opportunity to engage in artistic endeavor is a matter of financial and/or time boundaries.

CONCLUSION:

While much has been accomplished in SVG as it responds to changes on the world stage and attempts to address fulfilling our state party responsibility under the Convention we are cognisant of challenges as yet unmet.

Ensuring Gender Equality for our artistic creators has not yet been a primary focus. This is in part due to the fact that among our creators in visual art, fashion, craft, and the culinary discipline, there is female dominance. Male dominance occurs in music and the technical support sector. Thus work needs to be undertaken to even the gender balance for several sectors. Some time adding opportunities for males and sometimes adding for females.

International Sustainability programs while spoken about have yet to impact SVG in significant ways. Very little funding support or technical assistance has been accessed by SVG although EPA and other programs which should have possibilities. Thanks is due to the IFCD for its support in 2012/13 and SVG has continued to see ongoing benefit from those interventions.

A criticism of the EU EPA is that while on paper the agreement provides for movement of artists the reality has been that few if any Vincentians have been able to take advantage of the agreement to achieve economic reward. Further there is been little increase in flows of culture products and services in the south to north direction against the tsunami in the reverse direction.

All in all, more needs to be done to open greater benefits from implementation of the Convention and the various areas it leverages in an effort to have the citizens of SVG experiencing the rewards promised by the Convention.